

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION OF
HELEN ESTABROOKS
Related to Gregsons, Milton Bollinger (her father)

Interviewer is Evelyn McClure, speaking to Helen Estabrooks

Lets start with the Gregsons because they were here the longest, they came over in the 1850's.

EM What did your family tell you about this history of the Gregsons?

HE Really my grandmother didn't talk too much about it, but after she died I read the Gregson memoirs. I went to Sutter's Fort as a child. It was actually a family reunion of the Gregsons and the Butlers. James Marshall, who was a cousin. I don't remember my grandmother, but I have a picture of me, my grandmother and grandmother Bolinger. Grandmother Bolinger was Annie Gregson.

EM What year the picture taken?

HE I would have to be 1936. She looks real tall slender and white hair in this picture. My grandmother always looked older. I never asked a lot of questions, if you did they just shined you off.

EM They had a fairly large family, John and Elisha, your great grandparents.

HE They had a lot. There was Aunt Leta(?) (Petaluma), Uncle Bill (Sacramento) Uncle Richard (Roseville), Uncle Paul was killed working the St. Francis Dam, in southern California. Aunt Nita, I never met.

EM Did your mother have any brothers or sisters?

HE She had two sisters and one died as a baby. The surviving sister lives in Santa Rosa. My dad had two brothers and a sister. He's the Gregson, my mother is from Mexico. Her father was from Illinois, he went to Mexico and married my mother, then they moved back up here. When I was a baby they lived on the same ranch as grandma Bolinger. Lived in a separate house but on the same property.

My mother and her parents moved from Mexico to Sebastopol. My father's parents are from here in Green Valley. I guess the Bolinger as are Kansas.

EM Your parents, they grew up here, both of them?

HE No, mother was born in Mexico. When she was 10 she moved to Sebastopol. My father was born in Green Valley.

EM So they met here?

HE Yes, and married here. They both went to Analy High School

EM Your father did what for an occupation?

HE He worked on the grandfathers ranch. Part of the time he worked at Speese, but then he went back to the ranch. My mother worked in the berries and apples. The family was basically apple farmers. After my grandparents died, the boys stayed on the ranch, that was Fred.

EM There's a Milton Bolinger somewhere.

HE That's my father.

EM Did they do a tape? There's a tape down at the museum.

HE They didn't tell me, but I believe it. I think they donated a quilt top.

EM I think Fred has it, they loaned it to us for a quilt show at the museum. Maybe someday they will donate it. It had all the old names of people who made a square.

EM Where did you go to school?

HE Analy and Parkside. Pleasant Hill in the summer. I would stay out at the ranch during the week with my grandparents and go home on the weekends. I saw my father everyday because he worked on the ranch and just saw my mother on the weekends.

EM What did you do after high school?

HE I was a beauty operator. Got married and had three children, got divorced. Married a police man (Robert Noyes) from here and bought property in El Dorado Co. and built a house up there. He got cancer and died. Then I moved back here and married a man I knew 20 years ago. I live in Sebastopol.

EM So you've seen a lot of changes in Sebastopol, living here so long.

HE Oh yes. I was born in the old Hillside Hospital, across from the Safeway Store.

EM In the old house?

HE They made it into apartments later, I remember playing there at my girlfriends house. Her mother ran a restaurant next to the old bakery. Her name is Pat Ungerwitter, her mother was Josephine Wadel. She Don of Don's Bar sister in-law. She ran two or three cafes, she was an excellent cook. She was married about 7 or 8 times. I think the hospital at one time was a rest home, then they made it into apartments.

EM I think they also gave dance lessons in that building.

HE During elementary school, we didn't have much to do with downtown. We lived up on Harrison. We spent most of the time at the ranch.

I remember I used to play with this green telephone and pretend to call my uncles. Then one time they were going to come to the ranch, so I walked from school to the ranch. I had to go past the Japanese Temple. An old couple saw me and pick me up and took me to the ranch. And when I got there, the chief of police – Mr. Foster was there. My mother had said that I was missing. I was quite a ways. I had to walk from Parkside, past the Japanese Temple, out Elphic Rd. to Bolinger Lane, maybe 4-5 miles. I was in kindergarten or first grade. I guess in those days I didn't think about getting kid-napped or anything.

In my first marriage I had three children. In my next marriage I had four stepchildren. They all have children now. I've got 7, then I married a man who has two daughter and three great grandkids.

END OF TAPE